

## **AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**

1. (Currently Amended) A method at a decoder comprising:  
  
selecting for output one of a plurality of sequences of bits, each of the plurality of sequences being determined to have ~~[[a]]~~ the same maximum likelihood based on a plurality of soft symbol metrics for a data block, the selection being performed based on a plurality of weights associated with the plurality of sequences such that the selected sequence ~~[[having]]~~ has a weight that is greater than a minimum value of the plurality of weights ~~weight for the plurality of sequences~~, the weight of each sequence being determined by a number of non-zero bits in the sequence.
  
2. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, comprising determining the plurality of weights for each of the plurality of sequences having the maximum likelihood.
  
3. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 2, wherein determining the plurality of weights for each of the plurality of sequences having the maximum likelihood comprises summing the number of non-zero bits in each of the plurality of sequences.
  
4. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the method is performed at a decoder in a receiver in a wireless communications system.
  
5. (Original) The method of claim 4 wherein an all-ZERO decoder output is avoided in the presence of weak signal conditions.

6. (Currently Amended) A method at a decoder comprising:

selecting for output one of a first plurality of sequences of bits, each of the first plurality of sequences being determined to have ~~[[a]]~~ the same maximum likelihood based on a plurality of soft symbol metrics for a data block, the selected sequence being selected randomly from a second plurality of sequences, the second plurality of sequences being selected from the first plurality of sequences based on a plurality of weights associated with the first plurality of sequences such that the each of the sequences in the second plurality of sequences ~~[[having]]~~ has a weight that exceeds a minimum value of the plurality of weights ~~weight for the first plurality of sequences~~, the weight of each sequence being determined by a number of non-zero bits in the sequence.

7. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 6, comprising determining the plurality of weights for each of the plurality of sequences having the maximum likelihood.

8. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 7, wherein determining the plurality of weights for each of the plurality of sequences having the maximum likelihood comprises summing the number of non-zero bits in each of the plurality of sequences.

9. (Original) The method of claim 8 wherein an all-ZERO decoder output is avoided with high probability in the presence of weak signal conditions.

10-20. (Canceled)